



Department  
for Business  
Innovation & Skills

**A DUAL MANDATE FOR ADULT  
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION  
CONSULTATION**

**Response Form**

MARCH 2015

# A dual mandate for adult vocational education consultation - response form

A copy of the consultation document can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/adult-vocational-education-challenges-over-the-next-decade>

A further version of the response form is also available to complete on line at:

<https://bisgovuk.citizenspace.com/fe/a-dual-mandate-for-adult-vocational-education>

You can email or post this completed response form to:

Postal Address:

Strategic Funding Policy Team  
Bay G  
Department for Business, Innovation and Skills  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
2 St Paul's Place  
Sheffield  
S1 2FJ

Email: [FE.reform@bis.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:FE.reform@bis.gsi.gov.uk)

If you are emailing the document, please include "dual mandate" in the subject box.

The Department may, in accordance with the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information, make available, on public request, individual responses.

The closing date for this consultation is: 16 June 2015

## Your details

Name: Andy Walls

Organisation (if applicable): Joint Council for Qualifications

Address: 4 Millbank, Westminster, London SW1P 3JA

Telephone: 020 7227 0672

Email: wallsa@jcq.org.uk

Please tick the box below that best describes you as a respondent to this consultation

- Representative organisation
- Independent Training Provider
- College
- Awarding Organisation
- Charity or social enterprise
- Individual
- Legal representative
- Local government
- Local Enterprise Partnership
- Large business (over 250 staff)
- Medium business (50 to 250 staff)
- Small business (10 to 49 staff)
- Micro business (up to 9 staff)
- Professional body
- Trade union or staff association
- Industrial Strategy sector
- Other (please describe)

## **National Colleges**

**Question 1: How can the National College proposals be developed to ensure the employers across the whole sector benefit?**

No view.

**Question 2: How can National Colleges best work in partnership with local FE colleges, private training organisations and HEIs?**

No view.

**Question 3: Which priority sectors should be targeted for future National Colleges?**

No view.

## **Communications and branding**

**Question 4a: Would you support rebranding English higher vocational education as either "Professional Education and Training" or "Professional and Technical Education"?**

Yes

No

Don't know

**Question 4b: If so, which would you prefer and why?**

Professional Education and Training

Professional and Technical Education

**Please explain your response:**

**Question 5: Would you support a national advertising and marketing campaign for higher vocational education?**

Yes

No

Don't know

**Please explain your response:**

Yes. We welcome anything which would help raise the profile of the vocational education sector.

**Question 6: What other means of promoting higher vocational education do you think would be desirable?**

Fund it appropriately; offer accurate careers advice; make it valued.

**Question 7: How can we encourage more individuals to study higher vocational education?**

As above, fund it appropriately; offer accurate careers advice; make it valued.

## **Part-time higher education provision**

**Question 8: How can we encourage more individuals to study part-time Higher Education?**

Make it cost-effective for them to do so.

**A new overarching body to manage awarding powers for higher level vocational qualifications**

**Question 9: Should a new overarching vocationally focused body be established to grant higher vocational awarding powers?**

Yes

No

Don't know

**Please explain your response:**

No. We cannot see what problem this is the solution to.

**Question 10: How could we increase the role of employers in scrutinising applications for new awarding powers?**

The question assumes that this is the right thing to do. It may well be in some cases. Or it may be appropriate for employers to work with existing bodies with awarding powers. However, assuming the state can second-guess the right answer is unlikely to be the right call.

**Question 11a: How can the role of National Colleges in defining qualifications, apprenticeships standards and assessments and curricula best be taken forward?**

No view.

**Question 11b: Should other, high performing providers be empowered to do this?**

Yes

No

Don't know

**Please explain your response:**

**Question 12: Are the right awarding powers in place to facilitate an increase in the uptake of HNC, HND and BTEC type qualifications?**

Yes

No

Don't know

**Please explain your response:**

The qualifications are in place and are offered by HE providers and awarding bodies. I do not see any market failure on the supply side for these qualifications, the problem may lie more on the demand side. If there is considered to be a gap in the market, is the state the right body to try to address that gap?

**Question 13: How do we design delivery and assessment in a way which imparts work ethics, occupational attitudes and standards, while enabling learners to reflect on and improve these?**

We are not clear why Government would want to lead on the design of these. Involving employers with awarding bodies and providers should be effective.

**Question 14: How do we develop these mechanisms without losing existing quality products that already meet these standards and which employers recognise and have faith in?**

We are not clear why Government would want to lead on the design of these. Involving employers with awarding bodies and providers should be effective.

### **Refocusing the Foundation Degree curriculum**

**Question 15: Should the Government be prescriptive about the role of employers in the design, development and delivery of Foundation Degrees?**

Yes

No

Don't know

**Please explain your response:**

To do so would be to intervene misguidedly in the market and put a burden on employers. This would act as a break on innovative and original qualification design, which would be in no-one's interests.

### **Reviewing Foundation Degrees Awarding Powers (FDAPs)**

**Question 16: Should we consider some form of specialised FDAPs rather than general powers to award any kind of foundation degree?**

Yes

No

Don't know

**Please explain your response:**

No view.

**Question 17: Could the FDAPs process and/or criteria be changed to improve access while maintaining quality?**

Yes

No

Don't know

**Please explain your response:**

No view.

**Question 18: How do we ensure that the quality assurance arrangements are appropriate to foster the right type of HVE (higher vocational education)?**

No view.

### **Work-based learning and higher vocational education**

**Question 19: Should all HVE courses involve work based learning?**

Yes

No

Don't know

**Please explain your response:**

No view.

### **Specialisation in colleges**

**Question 20: Are there other lessons to learn from the implementation of the CoVE (Centres of Vocational Excellence) programme?**

Yes

No

Don't know

**Please explain your response:**

No view.

**Question 21: Should there be a new status for colleges specialising in higher level vocational skills as the Institute of Public Policy Research recommended?**

Yes

No

Don't know

**Please explain your response:**

This is worth considering, although we are not clear what any such special status would involve.

**Question 22: How can we support FE colleges to achieve excellence in higher level vocational skills?**

By funding them appropriately and giving them the autonomy they need and support they deserve in doing so.

### **HVE in the higher education setting – extending the role of universities and links with research and innovation**

**Question 23: What are the barriers to effective collaboration between colleges, universities and Catapult centres?**

No view.

**Question 24a: Should all Catapult centres be engaged in developing vocational education and higher level vocational skills training?**

Yes

No

Don't know

**Question 24b: If so, how best can this be achieved?**

**Question 25: What should the role of universities, colleges and Catapult centres be in growing technician level skills?**

No view.

**Question 26: How do we ensure even stronger employer/university engagement?**

No view.

## **Stronger virtual learning and use of technology**

### **Question 27: How can Government drive the further adoption of new technology in FE institutions?**

We are not clear that the Government alone has the competence or capability to do this. But it could work with providers, employers, awarding bodies and others in looking at what innovation best might be promoted.

## **Making the overall system more effective**

### **Question 28: What is the best way to ensure greater local accountability on the part of providers towards learners and employers, in terms of relevance and quality of provision, and social and economic impacts?**

No view.

### **Question 29a: What benefits would there be to commissioning Adult Skills Budget provision through local partnerships or through a lead provider acting on behalf of a partnership?**

### **Question 29b: What downsides might there be to such an approach?**

There is a danger here that the state would be commissioning provision “blind” – ie with no way to monitor the effectiveness and worth of the provision that it is paying for; and therefore no way to measure or assess the cost effectiveness of taxpayers’ money spent. To whom would the local partnerships be accountable?

### **Question 30: How do we ensure a stronger focus on outcomes without encouraging cherry picking of the easiest to help?**

By funding in a way that ensure that learners are most likely to be achieving the outcomes you (and they) want to reach. For example, by finding through the achievement of recognised, regulated high quality qualifications.

### **Question 31: What issues would there be with supporting programmes of study rather than qualifications?**

Qualifications are a way to attach currency to training and learning. This benefits employers and it benefits learners. Without the achievement of a qualification, and the benefit it brings, how can Government or learners know what return they are getting on their investment in further education? Qualifications are proven to increase earnings potential, personal satisfaction and completion rate and are therefore a key way to ensuring the better developed workforce you are seeking. They also benefit employers by making clear what a potential candidate can and cannot achieve.

There is a strong evidence base that BIS itself has collected in support of the value of qualifications, including Ipsos MORI and London Economics (2013) *The Impact of Further Education Learning* (BIS Research Paper Number 104) and Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2013) *Review of the Economic Benefits of Training and Qualifications, as Shown by Research Based on Cross-Sectional and Administrative Data* (BIS Research Paper Number 105). These benefits would be lost by funding (presumably unregulated) programmes of study.

## **Testing alternative approaches**

### **Question 32: What risks do we need to cater for in testing out new local arrangements to deliver skills provision for unemployed individuals and those with skills below level 2?**



As noted in the answer to question 29 above, there is a risk that the local arrangements a) do not use funding in the most effective way and b) are not transparently accountable for the budgets with which they are entrusted.

**Question 33: What new approaches can be taken on commissioning and funding streams to maximise the value gained from public spending to support unemployed and disadvantaged learners?**

We are not clear why the state would want to opt for a new approach which has no evidence in support of it, at the expense of an evidence-based and proven way of delivering effective training through the funding of high quality, regulated qualifications with a proven track record of delivering the outcomes required?

**Community Learning**

**Question 34: If we were to make the changes described in paragraph 208 of the consultation document, how should we look to phase them in over time?**

We would not recommend that you make such changes.

**Question 35: Would a greater focus on commissioning partnerships enhance partnership working and deliver a more coherent Community Learning offer?**

It depends on what the evidence base is telling you.

**Question 36: What would be the pitfalls and unintended consequences that could arise from these potential reforms and how can we avoid them?**

As noted above, there is a danger that in moving away from directing funding through regulated qualifications with a proven track record of delivering the outcomes that you are looking for, to an unaccountable and laissez-faire approach - hoping that local funding partnerships will target funding in just the way you want - will not work.

**Question 37a: Do you agree that some institutions, such as Specialist Designated Institutions (SDIs), play a unique role within the wider sector and should continue to receive funding on an individual basis?**

Yes

No

Don't know

**Question 37b: Are there other organisations that should be considered alongside the SDIs?**

No view.

**Question 38: What would be the risks associated with these proposals?**

No view.

**Question 39: Would there be benefits from greater integration of Community Learning and Adult Skills Budget funded provision?**

No view.

## **Supporting the development of resilience in the sector**

**Question 40: What are the barriers preventing some colleges from adjusting their provision and approach?**

No view.

**Question 41: What lessons can we learn from colleges who have already made significant changes?**

No view.

**Question 42: How can relationships between localities and FE providers be strengthened?**

Through awarding bodies which make the link between training provider and employers in the local community.

**Question 43: What are the risks to colleges and providers with the shift towards greater local influence and control over skills funding and accountability?**

The main risk is not where the funding sits, but the amount of funding required to meet the need. If this is not sufficient, any experiment to devolve funding to a local level is likely to be doomed from the start.

**Question 44: What are the advantages/disadvantages of Central Government taking an active intervention role in the FE landscape, including supporting new entrants and/or supporting mergers and rationalisation?**

**Advantages:**

**Disadvantages:**

Central Government's track record here is poor. The last time Government attempted to actively intervene in the FE landscape – the Diploma – was an unmitigated disaster. There are lessons still to be learned from Individual Learning Accounts. And the Government introduced the QCF in January 2010 and is now acting to remove it just five years later. Central Government acted vigorously a few years ago to increase the number of FE colleges becoming awarding bodies. Of 330 or so FE Colleges, only two chose to do so, and only one remains an awarding body. There are many salutary lessons of which the Government could take heed before assuming that market intervention must be the right answer.

**Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views on this consultation. We do not acknowledge receipt of individual responses unless you tick the box below.**

**Please acknowledge this reply**



© Crown copyright 2015

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit [nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3](http://nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3) or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk).

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available from [www.gov.uk/bis](http://www.gov.uk/bis)

Contact us if you have any enquiries about this publication, including requests for alternative formats, at:

Department for Business, Innovation and Skills  
1 Victoria Street  
London SW1H 0ET  
Tel: 020 7215 5000  
Email: [enquiries@bis.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@bis.gsi.gov.uk)

**BIS/15/145RF**